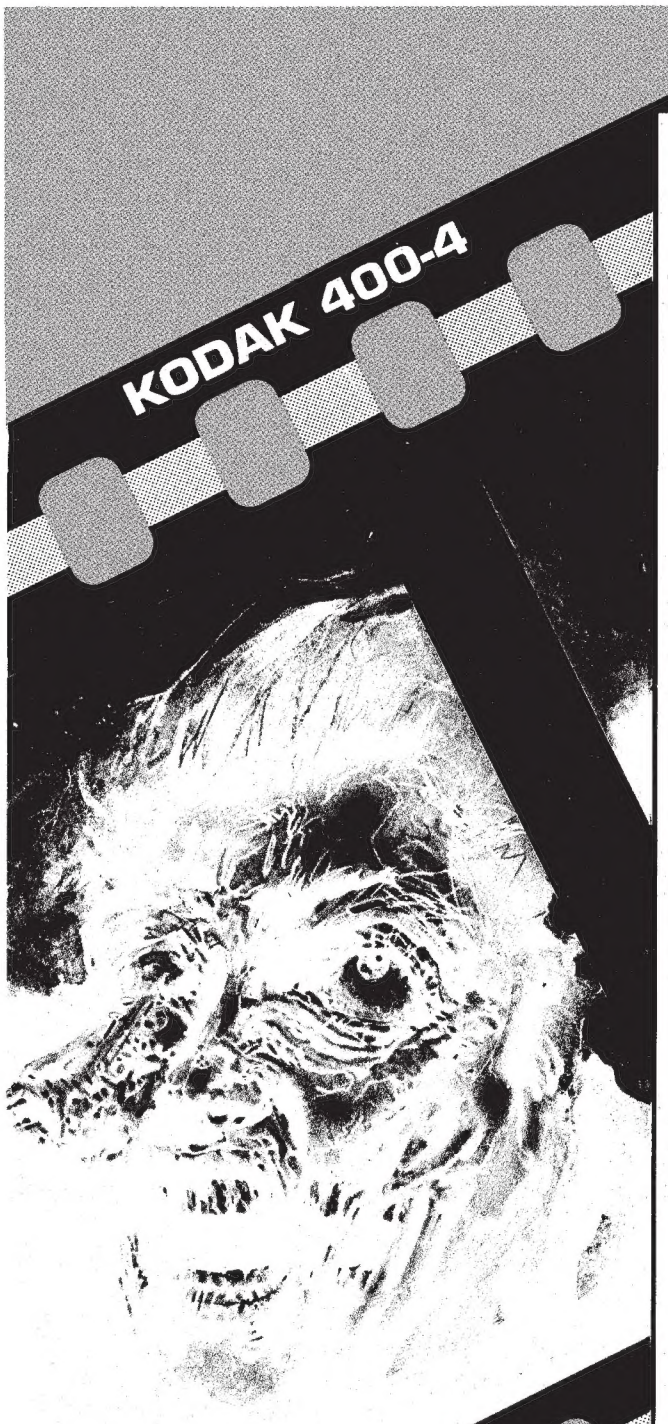
BOOK TWO OF TWO

RUINS™



RUINS

BOOK TWO: "WOMEN IN FLIGHT"

WARREN ELLIS
WRITER

CLIFF NIELSEN
TERESE NIELSEN
CHRIS MOELLER
ARTISTS

JONATHAN BABCOCK
LETTERER

TOM DANING
EDITOR

CARL POTTS
EDITOR IN CHIEF

COVER DESIGN & LOGO: **JOE KAUFMAN**
COVER PAINTING: **CLIFF NIELSEN**

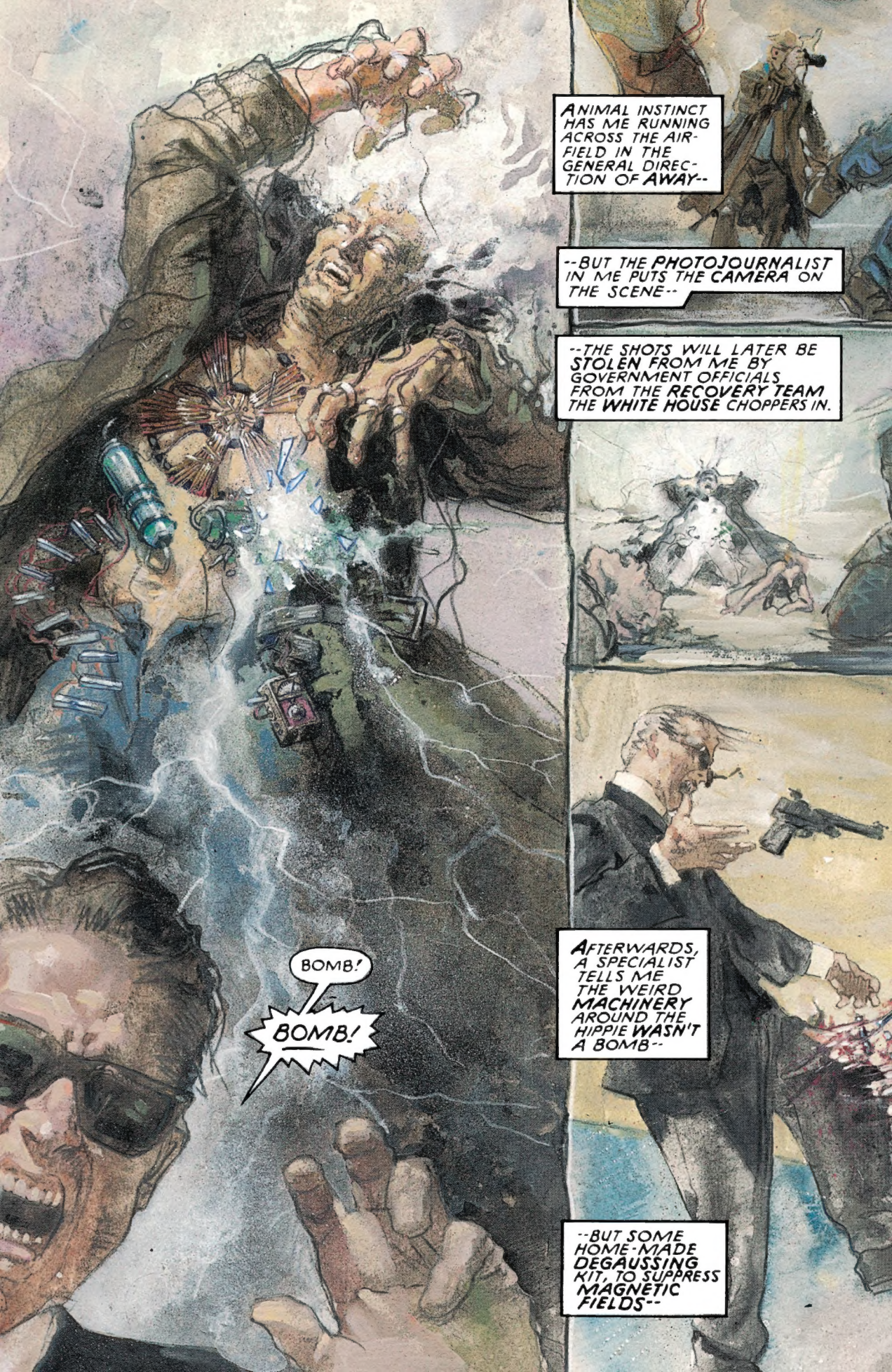
© 2018 MARVEL. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental.

FOR EVERY KISS,
A BULLET IN THE FACE,
FOR EVERY ACTION,
A REACTION.
FOR EVERY EVENT,
THERE EXISTS IN POTENTIAL
A MIRROR EVENT,
AN EXACTLY OPPOSITE POSSIBILITY.
IF THE WORLD YOU KNOW
IS ONE OF MARVELS,
WHERE MEN WITHOUT FEAR
FACE HORROR UNARMED,
AND WOMEN IN FLIGHT
RIDE THE UPPER REACHES
OF THE WEATHER...
...THEN, ONLY A MISSTEP
OR A STOPPED HEARTBEAT AWAY,
IS A WORLD OF RUINS.

MY GOD.
DID YOU SEE THAT? OUT THERE?
I'M PHIL SHELDON, AND I'M IN SEARCH OF THE WEIRD.
EXCUSE ME? HELLO?
MISS DARKHOLME, WASN'T IT? EXCUSE ME?

NN
NNONO
NO NO NO NO NO
MEN IN BLACK BOARDED THE PLANE FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCY LANDING. THEY TOOK MISS DARKHÖLME AWAY.
THEY CALLED HER A "SHAPESHIFTER" AND SAID THAT BEING SO MANY PEOPLE IN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME GAVE HER A MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER.
THEY SAID THE PILLS WOULD'VE STOPPED HER BRAIN FROM IMPLODING, IF SHE'D REMEMBERED TO TAKE THEM...

MY LEFT ARM ITCHES.
I DRY-SWALLOW TWO PILLS, DRY MY EYES, AND JOIN THE QUEUE TO DEPLANE.
RECOVERED, I SHOUT AT MYSELF FOR NOT BEING A PROFESSIONAL, AND GETTING MY CAMERA OUT.
HERE I AM, BLOWING MY TWILIGHT YEARS RESEARCHING A BOOK ON THE WAY THINGS CHANGED--
--THE WAY THE PARANORMAL STUFF THAT'S BEEN HAPPENING SINCE '61 HAS ALWAYS GONE WRONG--
--THE GOVERNMENT GUY SHOVES THAT HIPPIE AND I HEAR THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS AND METAL FROM OVER HERE--


ANIMAL INSTINCT HAS ME RUNNING ACROSS THE AIR-FIELD IN THE GENERAL DIREC-TION OF AWAY--
--BUT THE PHOTOJOURNALIST IN ME PUTS THE CAMERA ON THE SCENE--
--THE SHOTS WILL LATER BE STOLEN FROM ME BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM THE RECOVERY TEAM THE WHITE HOUSE CHOPPERS IN.
BOMB!
BOMB!
AFTERWARDS, A SPECIALIST TELLS ME THE WEIRD MACHINERY AROUND THE HIPPIE WASN'T A BOMB--
--BUT SOME HOME-MADE DEGAUSSING KIT, TO SUPPRESS MAGNETIC FIELDS--

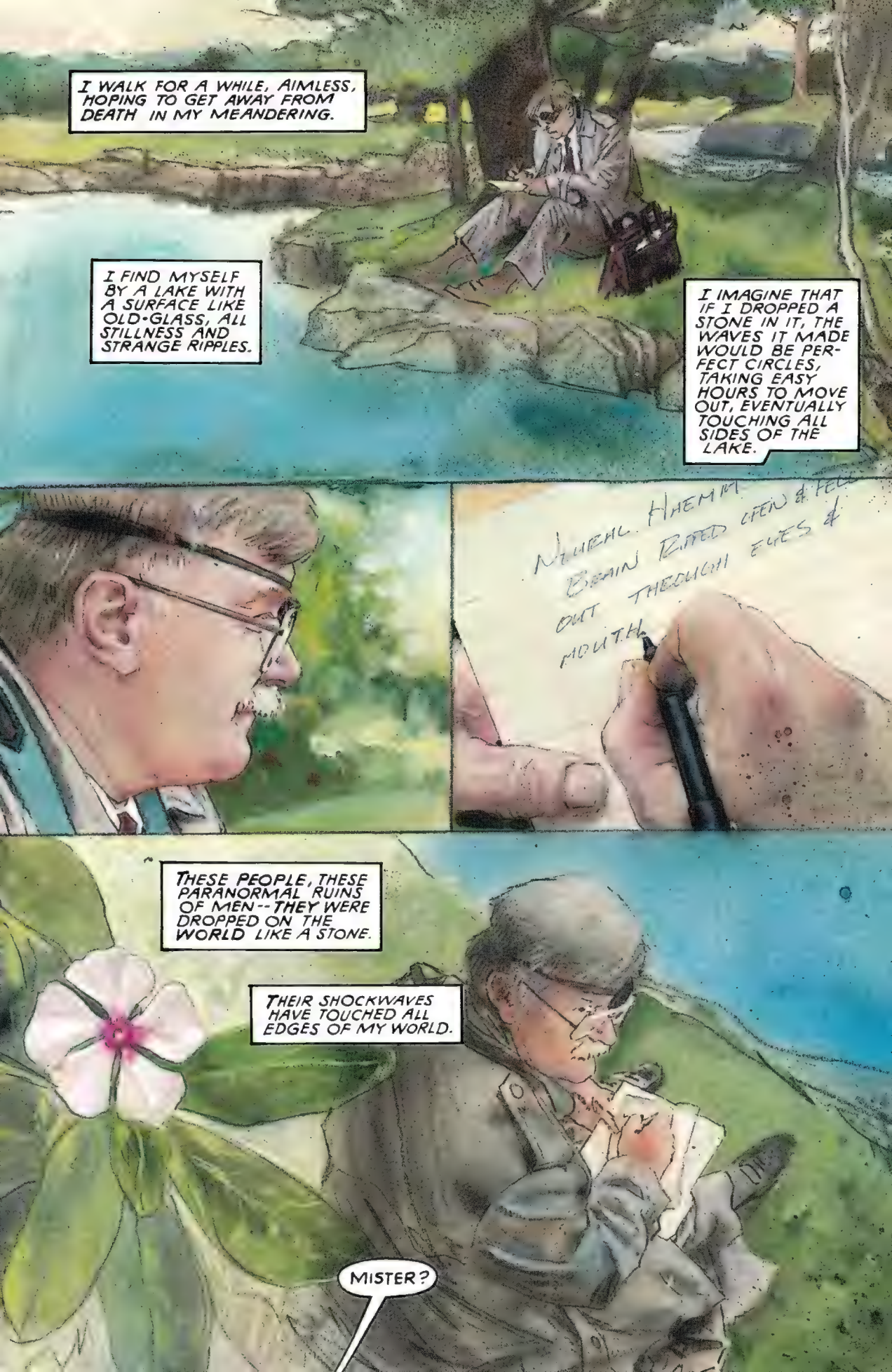
--THE IDIOT SMASHED IT WHEN HE SHOVED THE HIPPIE OUT OF THE WAY--
--AND NOW HE'S SCREAMING LIKE A BABY, THE IRONS IN HIS BLOOD BEING SUCKED OUT THROUGH HIS FLESH--
--A FILLING RIPS AWAY FROM ITS SETTING, SMASHING TWO PERFECTLY GOOD TEETH AS IT GOES--
--COULDN'T HIT THE BLOODY DENTURES, COULD IT?
HERE'S A WAILING, A WRENCHING OF STEEL FROM BENEATH THE PLANE, AS ALL OF A SUDDEN I KNOW HOW THIS IS GOING TO END--
--I RAISE MY CAMERA ANYWAY, LIKE A PROFESSIONAL--
--AND I SEE SOMETHING I RELIVE EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES.
THE IDIOT WHO STARTED IT, TOO CLOSE TO THE MAGNETISM--
--THE MEDICS TELL ME IT WAS A MASSIVE NEURAL HEMORRHAGE BROUGHT ON BY THE INTENSE ELECTROMAGNETICS--

THE DAYS MOVE SO QUICKLY FOR ME NOW.
I THINK I'M IN TEXAS.
DON'T USUALLY ALLOW JOURNALISTS ACCESS, Mr. SHELDON, BUT I HAVE FOND MEMORIES OF YOUR WORK FROM WHEN I LIVED IN NEW YORK--
--RECKON YOU WOULD GET SOME RIGHT FINE PHOTOGRAPHS FOR THE BUGLE HERE--
--THIS HERE'S THE SUMMERS BOY--
--PARTICULARLY HERE ON THE SHOCK CORRIDOR, Eh?
WAKE UP, YOU BUNCHA MOTHERS--
--INCINERATED HIS FAMILY WITH HIS EYES.
HAD TO BLIND THE BOY TO GET THEM EYEBEAMS UNDER CONTROL.
DIDN'T WE, BOY? HAD TO BLIND YOU.

IS--
IS THE PRESIDENT HERE?
HERE?
THE BOY DON'T REMEMBER TOO GOOD NO MORE.
"SHOCK "CORRIDOR"--IT'S A LITTLE JOKE, Y'SEE...
AAAA!
...THERE'S SOMETHING IN HERE TO SHOCK EVERYONE, Mr. SHELDON.
THE WRETCHED, THE HUNGRY, THE MUTANTS, THE CANNIBALS, THE BASTARDS...
THE WEIRD, MISTER SHELDON, THE WEIRD.
TAKE LI'L KITTY HERE. SHE DOES THIS INTANGIBLE THING, FANTASTIC T' SEE--
--BUT LAST TIME SHE TRIED ESCAPING, SHE GOT SOLID AGAIN IN THE CELL DOOR. LOST THREE FEET O' INTESTINE.

WHY DID THE BOY THINK THE PRESIDENT WAS COMING?
OL' PRESIDENT X COMES DOWN TO VISIT SOMETIMES.
SOMETIMES HE JUST SITS HERE IN HIS CHAIR AND STARES AT 'EM, KINDA SAD...
OTHER TIMES-- LORDY, THE THINGS HE SAYS TO 'EM LEAVES 'EM ALL SOBBING AND THROWIN' UP...
ONE TIME I REMEMBER, HE DROPPED HIS PANTS AND SCREAMS AT 'EM, "YOU ALL CAME FROM THIS!"
HAH! FANTASTIC T'SEE!
Oh, NOW THAT'S FOR QUICKIE'S OWN GOOD, MISTER SHELDON. DON'T GO FEELING SORRY FOR HIM.
WARDEN FISK, WHY ARE YOU KEEPING THESE ...PARANORMALS HERE?

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD TO DO.
BECAUSE THAT'S THE WAY IT IS.
THE PRESIDENT, Y'SEE, HE KNOWS.
HE KEEPS IT THIS WAY. IT'S THE WAY HE WANTS IT.
ALL LOCKED UP. QUIETLY.
YOU HEARD ABOUT THIS PLACE IN RUMORS, I KNOW. RUMORS DON'T HURT ANYTHING, MISTER SHELDON.
NOW LET'S GO AND COLLECT YOUR CAMERA AND SEE YOU ON YOUR WAY.
THE PRESIDENT SAID I SHOULD EXTEND YOU EVERY COURTESY, AFTER ALL.
HE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BRING NO PROOF OUT, BUT HE SAID HE WANTED TO GRANT A DYING MAN HIS LAST REQUEST.


I WALK FOR A WHILE, AIMLESS, HOPING TO GET AWAY FROM DEATH IN MY MEANDERING.
I FIND MYSELF BY A LAKE WITH A SURFACE LIKE OLD-GLASS, ALL STILLNESS AND STRANGE RIPPLES.
I IMAGINE THAT IF I DROPPED A STONE IN IT, THE WAVES IT MADE WOULD BE PERFECT CIRCLES, TAKING EASY HOURS TO MOVE OUT, EVENTUALLY TOUCHING ALL SIDES OF THE LAKE.
NNUEHL HAEMM
BRAIN RIPPED OPEN & FELL OUT THROUGH EYES & MOUTH.
THESE PEOPLE, THESE PARANORMAL RUINS OF MEN--THEY WERE DROPPED ON THE WORLD LIKE A STONE.
THEIR SHOCKWAVES HAVE TOUCHED ALL EDGES OF MY WORLD.
MISTER?

YOU LOOKED ALL ALONE.
SO I GOT YOU A FLOWER 'COS THEY'RE ALIVE AND CAN BE COMPANY.
TH-THANK YOU.
MY MOMMY TALKS TO HER FLOWERS ALL THE TIME.
WE'RE HAVING A PICNIC.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME HAVE SOME SANDWICHES WITH ME AND MY MOMMY?

Out by Montauk, Dr. Donald Blake (no legit M.D. struck off) operating Cult of Thor (sp?) -Thor apparently some Norse deity who Blake "channels" -cultists live in cave system - Blake first "saw" Thor after eating fly agaric mushrooms in Scandinavia somewhere - fly agaric used by Vikings to send 'em into berserker rages — hallucinogen —
Church o/the Next Generation -high priestess/manageress Emma Frost- children are legally adopted by Church from acolyte parents- kids undergo surgery to bring out "psychic abilities" — Frost takes "dowries" from parents to fund surgery —

Don't know where I am -- driven out to the desert in a noisy old bus with blacked-out windows.

QUINTANO CARNIVAL -- the last American freakshow -- rumors of high weirdness -- Paranormality.

Makeshift "Circus Ring" laid out on desert floor -- ugly people do their schtick for thin audience of uglier people.

Attractive woman does something illegal with a python for ten, fifteen minutes.

Hush comes over the place as the main attraction rides slowly into the ring.

"Saint John" or "Blaze", they call him -- lots of scarring on his face, dead eyes like a flagellant.

Moves slowly and carefully, like a concentrating child.
Like his fingers won't obey his brain without effort.
"Blaze", they called him.
"Saint John".
Getting old-- never saw it coming.
Never put it together.
The name, the scars, the deadness.
The thin, evil smell of gasoline and the lighter.

This was the last time Blaze did this stunt.
"Saint John" never survived.
But-- for hours after this shot, he rode around the desert, screaming.
Technically dead-- facial fat flying off his torched head like hot rain.
But still riding.
Screaming.

IT'S NOT JUST ONE THING.
IT ALL WENT WRONG.
I THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND A SINGLE MISTAKE, A SINGLE ACCIDENT THAT LED TO IT ALL.
AND I DIDN'T. MAYBE WE'RE JUST LIVING IN THE WORLD OF MURPHY'S LAW--
--EVERYTHING THAT CAN GO WRONG, WILL GO WRONG--
--WITHOUT EXPLANATION.
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT. THE BEST I CAN DO IS TO SHOW PEOPLE WHAT THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN LIKE.
BEST I CAN DO IS GET SOME SLEEP TO MAKE SURE I'M STILL ALIVE TO WRITE THE GODDAMN BOOK.
I'M SO TIRED... AND THE WORST BIT IS STILL TO COME...

AND I DREAM OF MEN ON FIRE IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE AIR, AND WOMEN IN FLIGHT, DANCING IN STILETTOS ON CLOUDS.
AND THE GOOD MEN COME AND DRAG PRESIDENT TRICKY FROM HIS RETIREMENT PALACE AND KICK HIM TO DEATH.
AND THEY SHOW PRESIDENT X WASHINGTON AND EVERYPLACE ELSE AND MAKE HIM CRY UNTIL HE PROMISES TO FIX IT ALL.
AND GOOD THINGS HAPPEN EVERY DAY.
AND WALKING IN THE STREET BECOMES LIKE GOING TO CHURCH FOR THERE ARE HIGH FASHION ANGELS IN THE SKY AND WE CLAP AND CHEER.
AND GOOD THINGS HAPPEN EVERY DAY.

OKLAHOMA; Militiamen taken into custody by police following reports of threatening behavior.
NO EXAGGERATION.
BRIEF INTERVIEW: Unashamed Fascists (Monroe, right; "Hitler was a great man w/sad failings") with cannibal leanings, particularly in Creed (left).
"Bucky" Barnes, center, just spewed out sexual obscenities until sedated

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS...
"I KNOW YOU DON'T APPRECIATE VISITORS, MAJOR--
GRIMM
"--BUT I BELIEVE ALICIA MASTERS WROTE YOU TO EXPECT ME. I'M PHIL SHELDON-- FROM THE BUGLE."
NASA
ALL RIGHT, MISTER SHELDON. YOU GOT ME. I'M BEN GRIMM.
YOU WANT THE STORY? GET COMFORTABLE.
CIGARETTE?

SEE THE RUSSIANS FINALLY GOT A GUY UP LAST MONTH?
WOULDA BEEN SOONER BUT THE COMRADES RAN OUT OF RUBBER BANDS.
HEH.
ANYWAY. I WAS GETTING INTO ENGINEERING AT THE CAPE, LECTURING AT THE LOCAL UNIVERSITY THERE, TOO.
THAT'S HOW I MET REED RICHARDS AND THE STORM KIDS.
SCREW COMMUNISTS
"HE WAS INTERESTED IN ASTRAEA..."

"... THE LINK BETWEEN THE ORBITAL CAPSULES I USED TO RIDE, AND THE APOLLO MOONSHOTS THAT'D FOLLOW.
"ASTRAEA'D BE A WORKHORSE THAT'D REALLY FLY, NOT JUST A BOX THAT WENT 'ROUND IN CIRCLES.
"RICHARDS WANTED TO STUDY COSMIC RAY ACTIVITY IN LOCAL SPACE, SOMETHING ORBITALS WOULD NEVER REACH.
"ASTRAEA, THOUGH BUILT AND FUELED, WOULDN'T BE READY TO GO TILL SIXTY-FIVE. RICHARDS DIDN'T WANT TO WAIT.
"HE TURNED UP AT MY HOUSE ONE NIGHT, RAVING.
"HE WANTED TO STEAL ASTRAEA, SHOW 'EM ALL THAT RED TAPE WAS ANTI-SCIENCE.
"WANTED ME TO FLY THE SHIP FOR HIM."
WE HAD A FIGHT. I DECKED HIM.
I TOLD HIM I WANTED TO PUT LATERAL MOTORS, ON ASTRAEA. IT'D TAKE MONTHS JUST FOR THE MATH. SHE WASN'T READY.
AND THE STUPID BASTARD DIDN'T HEAR A WORD I WAS SAYING.

REED TALKED SOME TENURE-HOUND FROM THE FACULTY CALLED VON DOOM INTO FLYING ASTRAEA.
AND THEY STOLE HER, YEAH.
THEY WENT UP, WITH THEIR WIDGETS AND ALL, TO RECORD COSMIC RAY ACTIVITY...
...INTO A FLASHSTORM OF COSMIC RADIATION.
IF ASTRAEA'D HAD DECENT LATERAL MOTORS, VON DOOM COULD'VE MANEUVERED THEM AWAY FROM IT.
Huh? THIS PICTURE?
THAT'S THE STORM BOY, THE FIRST ONE WE FOUND WHEN ASTRAEA CAME DOWN.
THE BOY CAUGHT FIRE AT CELLULAR LEVEL-- BURNED FROM THE BONES OUTWARD.

"THAT'S HIS SISTER. WHEN THE RECOVERY TEAM ARRIVED, SHE WAS INVISIBLE-- LIGHT-REFLECTIVE.
"MADE HER EYES LIGHT-REFLECTIVE TOO, SO SHE WAS ACTUALLY BLIND.
"THEY DIDN'T KNOW SHE WAS THERE UNTIL SHE FELL ON HER BROTHER."
YOU KNOW WHAT THE WORST OF IT IS?
DESPITE HAVING NO LATERALS... DESPITE THE FLASHSTORM...
VON DOOM? I NEVER GOT ANY PHOTOS.
THEY SAID HE WAS ANIMAL WHEN HE WENT UP, AND MINERAL WHEN HE CAME DOWN.
THEY SAY HE WAS WEARING HIS INTERNAL ORGANS ON THE OUTSIDE.
I CAN'T HELP THINKING IT WOULDA BEEN DIFFERENT IF I'D FLOWN HER.
CAN'T HELP IT.

NEW YORK CITY.
MARVELS.
A GREEN MAN. A BODY THAT STRETCHED LIKE RUBBER BEFORE RIGOR MORTIS SET IN.
SILVER SPACEMEN AND INVISIBLE WOMEN.
MARVELS. THAT'S WHAT I'LL CALL THE BOOK.

I HAVE ALL THE NOTES, ALL THE INTERVIEWS.
I CAN WRITE THE BOOK, AND, PLEASE GOD, I CAN WRITE IT QUICKLY.
I WISH I HAD TIME TO REALLY CRAFT THE BOOK, MAKE THE CLEAREST AND BEST POSSIBLE CASE OF WHY THE WORLD WENT WRONG.
THAT WEASEL KID PARKER STOLE THAT TIME FROM ME.
SO HOT TODAY. RAN OUT OF PILLS ON THE TRAIN BACK, HAVE TO STOP AT THE PHARMACIST LATER...
PARKER. PETER PARKER...

SO HOT. I HATE NEW YORK. STOP FOR A MINUTE.
PARKER. I ALWAYS HATED HIM. WEASELLY KID.
HAD TO BE PARKER, DIDN'T IT?
LOUSY PHOTOGRAPHER.
WORKED FREELANCE FOR THE BUGLE, PAYING FOR HIS COLLEGE TUITION AND KEEPING THAT POISONOUS OLD AUNT OF HIS.
A SCIENCE MAJOR. KNOW-IT-ALL WEASEL.
KID MESSED UP A COLLEGE EXPERIMENT. GOT BITTEN BY A SPIDER HE'D IRRADIATED.
GOT INFECTED. RADDLED WITH A RAGING MUTANT VIRUS.
GOT INFECTIOUS. VISITED THE BUGLE OFFICES BEFORE HIS RASH SHOWED...

CONTAGIOUS LITTLE WEASEL.
-HK-
OH--
-HKK-
HKKKK

END.